

the way we took corners,
ran red lights,
never slowing for a second,
60 miles per hour
all the way.

And when we got there
and I asked you about it,
you didn't even know
you had been going
so very fast.

How odd it was,
you ahead of me
leading the wild way
so vulnerable
so fearless
like a mad woman
like a bat out of hell
and the children,
your sleeping babies,
so precarious
in the back seat.

POOL PARTY

I knew I couldn't get out of going
to the party, so I made up my mind that
at least I wasn't getting in the pool.

Barry offered to loan me some trunks
of his. They were huge, baggy things
with bright Hawaiian flowers on them.

It really seemed to bother him that
I didn't want to swim in his pool.

He must have asked me a dozen times
if I was sure I didn't want the trunks.

"Naw," I said, "I'm fine." I laid back
in the deck chair and worked on my
farmer tan.

The girls from the office took off
their clothes (except for swimsuits,
of course) and gradually got used to
being nearly naked in front of each other.

The sun was straight up and hot. I sat
there sweating in my blue shirt and
brown cords, looking like a wino,
sipped at a beer and watched the girls
through slit eyes.

Everybody kept trying to get me into
the goddamn pool. They were obsessed

with it. Nothing else would do. I had to get wet. Romeo and Tim were threatening to throw me in.

I closed my eyes and waited for it to end. I knew I was being unsociable. I couldn't help it. For one thing, my back was badly sunburned last weekend, and now it was peeling.

A weak excuse, admittedly. Besides, I'm really a very modest guy. I don't want to undress in front of all the girls. I'm shy.

And then, there's my grief. How can I explain that to them? How can I explain that I don't want their beer, their sandwiches, their swimming pool, their sunny day, their secretaries in bikinis.

Around five o'clock it got cool and they let me go home.

CATS

Raymond Chandler was a lush but he liked cats. I've got several books with his picture and he's always puffing on his pipe and stroking a cat. You'd think with all of his hardboiled talk he'd be smoking Camels and have a dog, a bloodhound.

Jack Kerouac was another alcoholic. God, he loved his cat. He just wanted to hide out with his bottle and his novels and his beloved cat. One of the last photos of him shows him all bloated and sad and out of focus, holding his cat.

We all know Charles Bukowski has done his share of drinking. But I'll be goddamned, I never thought he liked cats, until I was looking at a book of pictures taken while he was touring in Germany. There he is, playing with a cat, feeding it a scrap from the dinner table, lifting it up by the front paws. Then,